

# Constance



**By Robert Prins**

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I was busy: work all day; a ministry; a long list of unanswered emails to answer; copious quantities of church meetings and responsibilities; and family life, all left me with minimal time for interruptions. But the lawn had grown long and had to be mown.

Earmuffs deadened the roar of the lawnmower, as well as all the other sounds of that Saturday afternoon, so I didn't hear the telephone ringing inside the house. I had no idea there had been a phone call, or that the phone call had been for me.

When the lawn was done, I moseyed on inside to carry on labouring through my Saturday list. Then my daughter dropped the bombshell. Constance from church had called and wanted to speak to me. Could I phone her back please?

My heart rate and blood pressure rose with the news that Constance had called. My mind flashed back to my previous encounters with her. I had known Constance almost all my life. Strong-minded and forceful. Constance had opinions that were often very different to my own. Previous phone calls from Constance still caused me anxiety. She could find problems in things I thought were wonderful. And Constance also had a network of people with whom she would discuss the outcome of any conversation we had.

As a church leader, I had to tread carefully with Constance. Keeping her happy and doing the right thing for everyone often seemed like a delicate balance.

Questions raced through my mind. What was the problem now? What was I going to be in for? Would I get an ear-bashing? Would I have to eat humble pie ... again? How long would this phone call take? How much work was it going to cause? How many more problems would it create? I recoiled from the flashbacks, but I knew what to expect.

My hectic Saturday was now tense. Could I procrastinate? I could act like mowing the lawn had taken all day and call back in the evening. Maybe I could pretend I had forgotten to call – but hers was a call I wouldn't forget – and I couldn't lie. I decided the best course of action was to get it over with, make the call, take the ear-bashing, eat humble pie and be prepared to pick up the pieces afterward.

Resigning myself to my fate, I picked up the telephone and dialed, hesitating before I punched in the last number in case I needed to change my mind. Then it was done, and I heard the ringtone.

One ring. Two rings. Three rings. Maybe she wouldn't answer. I began to hope. But then there was a click. "Hello?"

"Hi Constance, it's Robert here. You called?" I asked tentatively, bracing myself for the barrage.

"Oh, yes, Robert. I wanted to say thank you so much for the talk you did last Sunday. You so reminded me of my late husband. And with regards to that project you are working on, maybe I can help..."

I was stunned! Never trust a flashback.

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*One ring. Two rings. Three rings. Maybe she  
wouldn't answer. I began to hope. But then  
there was a click. "Hello?"*

*I had missed phone call from Constance.  
Previous experience had told me what to  
expect...*

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